

FBIS 12 FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

SUNDAY TIMES: U.S. KNEW OF LEBANON MASSACRE BEFORE BEGIN

PM300720 LONDON THE SUNDAY TIMES IN ENGLISH 30 JAN 83 PP 1-2

("EXCLUSIVE" ARTICLE BY DAVID BLUNDY IN JERUSALEM AND HENRY BRANDON IN WASHINGTON)

(TEXT) AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS KNEW THAT KILLER SQUADS WERE AT WORK IN THE SHATILA AND SABRA REFUGEE CAMPS IN BEIRUT AT LEAST 24 HOURS BEFORE THE MASSACRES ENDED, AND MORE THAN 36 HOURS BEFORE THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER, MENAHEM BEGIN, HEARD THE NEWS. A TOTAL OF 800 APLESTINIANS DIED.

THE AMERICAN OFFICIALS WOULD NOT REVEAL THE SOURCE OF THEIR INTELLIGENCE BUT CONFIRM THEY HEARD THAT KILLINGS WERE TAKING PLACE ON THE EVENING OF THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, ONLY A FEW HOURS AFTER THE ISRAELIS HAD ALLOWED THE CHRISTIAN PHALANGISTS INTO THE CAMPS.

NEWS OF "KILLINGS AND BEATINGS" IN THE CAMPS ALSO REACHED MEMBERS OF THE U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE IN WASHINGTON AT 9:30 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY. A SENIOR COMMITTEE AIDE TOLD THE SUNDAY TIMES THAT HE PASSED THE INFORMATION "TO A NUMBER OF SENATORS" JUST BEFORE THEY WENT INTO CLOSED SESSION WITH A DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE, LAWRENCE EAGLEBURGER.

ACCORDING TO EVIDENCE BEFORE THE ISRAELI JUDICIAL INQUIRY INTO THE MASSACRES, WHICH IS NOW PREPARING ITS REPORT, THE ISRAELI DEFENCE MINISTER, ARI'EL SHARON, RECEIVED THE FIRST REPORT FROM SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS THAT "SOMETHING UNUSUAL HAD HAPPENED" AT SABRA AND SHATILA AT 9 P.M. LOCAL TIME -- 3 P.M. IN WASHINGTON -- ON FRIDAY THE 17TH.

BEGIN CLAIMS HE FIRST HEARD OF THE MASSACRE FROM A BBC WORLD SERVICE BROADCAST AT 5 PM THE FOLLOWING DAY, SATURDAY THE 18TH.

DESPITE WASHINGTON'S EARLIER KNOWLEDGE, NIETHER THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS NOR THE SENATORS PASSED THE INFORMATION TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. ONE EXPLANATION FOR THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS' FAILURE TO PASS IT ON IS THAT THE SOURCES WERE SO SENSITIVE THEY COULD NOT BE REVEALED.

THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE AIDE, WHO SPOKE TO THE SUNDAY TIMES IN JERUSALEM, SAID HIS MESSAGE "DIED ON THE FRONT LINE. BY THAT I MEAN THAT THE SENATORS DID NOT RAISE THE MATTER WITH EAGLEBURGER. I DON'T KNOW WHY THAT WAS. IT HAS BEEN HAUNTING ME EVER SINCE."

AMERICAN OFFICIALS IN BEIRUT AND TEL AVIV WERE IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THEIR ISRAELI COUNTERPARTS THROUGHOUT FRIDAY AFTERNOON AND SATURDAY MORNING.

THE FIRST RELEVANT COMMUNICATION WAS AT 6 P.M. (JERUSALEM TIME) ON FRIDAY THE 17TH. THE U.S. CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN TEL AVIV PHONED HANAN BARO-ON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM, TO ASK ABOUT THE ENTRY OF ISRAELI TROOPS INTO BANKS IN BEIRUT AND THE ENTRY OF THE PHALANGE INTO THE REFUGEE CAMPS.

30 JAN 0822Z HJO/BB

ILLEGIB